Progressive Calvinism

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A Reader's Reaction And Our Reply

When someone plays back a tape recorder all voices are identifiable and sound natural except your own; apparently, a man does not hear his own voice as others hear it. Similarly, others view a man on practically all matters differently from his own view of himself. It is frequently shocking to find out how exactly opposite someone regards what you are doing than you regard it yourself.

We in PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM have been holding the opinion that we are *progressive;* but some readers now say we are *reactionary.* We consider ourselves extremely unworldly and idealistic in our ethical ideas, but others say that we are *materialistic.*

What are we, progressive or reactionary? idealistic or materialistic?

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We have received a letter which set us to thinking. What must these "reactionary and materialistic" ideas be which we are accused of having? And so we turned the pages of the 1955 issues and listed the major subjects about which we have written. It was personally profitable for us to do so. It gave us a perspective of the first year of our publication.

We quote the important parts of the letter we received, and we briefly list the ideas we have culled from our 1955 issues. Whether those ideas are progressive or reactionary, idealistic or materialistic is for the reader to decide. (It is not possible to do more here than merely outline what we have written.)

Progressive Calvinism League:

> May I direct this letter to the snug little triumverate[a] . . . who seem to comprise the staff of the magazine, PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM.
>
> It was with mild interest that I read the 1955 issues of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM. None of the articles were[b] really provocative — only pathetic examples of crass eclectic and syncretic attempts to apologize for material[c] and reactionary ideas. Seldom does one read such presumptive, pseudo-erudite and sophomoric drivel which claims for itself such span and depth.
>
> * * *
>
> [Signature]

a-Should be *triumvirate.*
b-Should be *was.*
c-Should be *materialistic.*

We summarize seven principal ideas which must be the "material and reactionary ideas" of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM to which the writer of the foregoing refers.

God As A Moral Governor

1. Firstly, there is that idea (1) that God *as a rule* rewards the good and punishes the evil in this life. If that is a materialistic idea, then we admit the correctness of the charge. The alternative ideas are (2) that God *as a rule* rewards the evil and punishes the good in this life; (3) that God is not the

moral governor of the universe, and that He is indifferent or inactive in promoting the good and resisting the evil; or (4) that He is unable to help the good or punish the evil. Which of these four alternatives (that God is moral, immoral, amoral or powerless) do so-called Christians wish to accept? There are no other alternatives.* It is not reasonable to refuse to take a position in regard to the four possibilities we have mentioned. Regardless of the choices of others, we choose proposition number one—God rewards the good and punishes the evil, that is, He is moral. If the reader believes Scripture, let him read Deuteronomy 28 and see what Moses declares. In regard to this doctrine (that God rewards the good and punishes the evil) we may not be good neo-Calvinists but we are, we are very sure, in agreement with Moses. (Of course, we are not declaring absolute uniformity for the rule; we are only declaring that the proposition which we accept is the *rule*. The exceptions need explanation, in further detail sometime.) This Mosaic doctrine makes us *cheerful* Christians. We do not view the Christian religion as a melancholy and lost piece of business. Maybe the doctrine that God does not in this life reward the good and punish the evil (that is, that He is not moral now) is associated in some obscure way with a doctrine of Common Grace, which is held in varying forms in the Christian Reformed Church.

All this is, we suppose, very materialistic in the estimation of our critic.

Competition Between Christianity And Socialism In Regard To Sanctimony

2. Secondly, we are steadily attacking *sanctimony* and "piosity." To attack sanctimony is, we suppose, also a materialistic idea. Whoever attacks an idea of brotherly love which goes beyond what Scripture requires is not spiritual enough nor idealistic enough. We have just finished reading a book by a famous philosopher in one of the great universities of the land which attacks Christianity as being an evil. And how can his charges be summarized? very briefly: the Christian religion teaches practical doctrines which are nonsensical and hypocritical; it talks piously but that piousness is foolish or insincere. There is enough truth

*Except that there is no God at all.

in that grievous charge so that we should consider re-examining ourselves soberly as Christians and Calvinists and remove any grounds for just criticism. It is our belief that part of the difficulty of the church in this matter is that it has let itself be drawn into a trap by socialism-communism. Socialism-communism *does* have a sanctimonious, pious law of brotherly love, namely, From each according to his ability to each according to his need. The Christian law of love is much less extensive; it is merely, Love thy neighbor *as thyself*. To love him no more than you love yourself may be materialistic, unidealistic, non-Christian and non-Calvinist. Nevertheless, we will hold to the materialistic law of love in Scripture, Love thy neighbor as *thyself*. No more. No less.

Doubt About Divine Right Of Every Government

3. Thirdly, we hold an idea which our critic would probably call a reactionary idea, namely, the idea that there is no such thing as the divine right of kings, nor the divine right of legislatures, nor the divine right of *any* government in the sense of a pipe line of power *directly* from God. We do not believe that a government has powers beyond enforcing the Second Table of the Decalogue and if it has no more proper power than that, then it does not need a special pipe line. Throughout all ages governments have made excessive claims for themselves. It is the making of just such excessive claims that is itself reactionary. We are, we admit, in the tradition of the Founding Fathers of the United States; they were determined to have a *limited* government. That is 150 years ago. We are reacting back to those ideas. In that sense we are reactionary. But we are not reacting back to practically all of the rest of the ancient history of mankind from the earliest time onward. Nearly all of that history was a sad story of governments making great claims for themselves — that they were directly from God or from the gods. It is true that individuals in the specific Calvinist group to which we belong, and also that individuals in associated Calvinist groups, believe *all* government to have a "divine origin" and *therefore* to be worthy of obedience and cooperation. Consider the recent attitude of some pious Dutch Calvinists who argued that Calvinism required that all Netherlanders cooperate with Hitler! Maybe *that* was progressive and not reactionary!

Cooperation With Evil

4. Fourthly, we hold another idea which in the judgment of our critic may also possibly be reactionary; we are against cooperation with communism. There are "neo-orthodox" churchmen in the world who are tolerant of the idea of cooperation with communism. PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is not in favor of cooperating in any way with the greatest butchers in the history of mankind — men who are false, cruel, violent. We plead guilty to that very reactionary idea. We think we are simply following Scripture, which warns against cooperation with evil men.

Coercion Versus Meekness

5. Fifthly, we are against coercion of all[a] kinds, including coercion by labor unions. The latter is, we admit, a very reactionary idea, in the estimation of many people. We realize that some people believe that a union may properly promote its cause (1) by violence on the picket line, and (2) by coercing a timid employer not to keep on the payroll anyone who refuses to join the union and obey the dictates of the union leaders. We consider *all* such coercion evil. We are opposed to union coercion, church coercion, business coercion — all[a] coercion. The churches dare not coerce people into membership on the ground that the church does them some good; yet on the ground that the union does the worker some good, many churches approve of unions coercing workers to become members. *We* have a single rule of morality, namely, what is not valid nor wise for a church, is not valid nor wise for a union. If opposition to all[a] coercion is reactionary, then we are reactionary. We hold: "Blessed are the meek [those who do not employ any coercion] for they shall inherit the earth."

True Individualism

6. Sixthly, we hold to ideas known as Individualism. The term, individualism, in the history of thought has unfortunately come to cover two contrary ideas, which can be designated as (1) French[b] individualism and (2) English and American[c] individualism. The French individualism is associated with the name of

[a]Except the coercion to enforce the Second Table of the Law.
[b]Or Rationalistic.
[c]Or Antirationalistic.

Rousseau and with the French Revolution. It was a *false* individualism. Various Dutch Calvinists have vigorously opposed that *French* individualism, and properly so. But *English* individualism was always basically irreconcilable with French individualism. There are great statesmen and economists and philosophers in the history of English individualism — Edmund Burke, Adam Smith, Lord Action. The greatest flowering of English individualism was the founding of the United States. And what do Dutch thinkers do? They fail to discriminate between (1) French individualism and (2) English and American individualism and by so doing throw a cloud of suspicion over the character of the government of the United States. But we have no such doubt; we consider this country's Founding Fathers to have adhered closer to the *principles* of the Christian religion than any government that any European country has had. We have, naturally, no patience with the confusion which consists in considering the individualism of Rousseau to be the same individualism as that of the founders of this country. But a disturbing thing is happening. Through another channel, as by a back door, some neo-Calvinists, who use the customary phrases against French individualism, are accepting the basic ideas of French individualism.

Liberty Versus Equality

7. Seventhly, and finally, we are for *liberty,* and if it is reactionary to be in favor of liberty, then we are unquestionably reactionary. Genuine Biblical liberty has relatively few modern champions. The ideal of liberty has been replaced by the ideal of equality. God made people different one from another. One man can do something better; another can do something else better; and some men are better all around. Why God made people *different* — or as people insist on saying, *unequal* — we do not know, except that there is the rather obvious reason that if everybody were identical there would be no cooperation among men and no human society. Everybody would be self-sufficient. Society would have no bond or cement to hold it together. Because there is no advantage in cooperation, people would no longer have an inducement to cooperate; and no longer having that inducement, they would not cooperate. Society would be genuinely atomistic. But whatever God's reason for making people *different,* there is one thing of which men may be sure, namely, that they *are* differ-

ent. Those *differences* in people, according to modern theory, should be nullified. The purpose of the government is not to let freedom and lawful self-interest result in natural and voluntary combinations and in differences (called inequalities); no, the modern theory is that the government has a great function, namely to promote *equality*. That promotion of equality consists in nullifying the differences which the Creator created in men. But few people clearly understand that that is possible only by treating men *unequally* and by having unequal laws designed to bear differently on one man than on another. You treat *A* differently from *B* in order to make *A* "equal" to *B*; and you treat *B* differently from *C* in order to make *B* "equal" to *C*. There are no longer really "general" laws. Unequal laws are against the plain teaching of Scripture, and of course *liberty* is lost under such a system. PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM is against such a system. It considers such laws evil and accursed by God. We do not consider it to be a function of government to nullify the differences in creation by means of laws designed to bear unequally on people. If *that* is reactionary, then we are reactionary.

Summary Of 1955 Writings

We summarize. Here are the seven ideas regarding which we have in preliminary form revealed our views during 1955. And in order to contrast them with other ideas we are setting up the contrary ideas:

PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM'S Propositions (*which are criticized as being "material and reactionary"*)	Contrary Propositions (*which others apparently think are idealistic and modern*)
1. God is a *moral* governor of the universe, generally rewarding the good and punishing the evil.	1. God is immoral, generally punishing the good and rewarding the evil; or is amoral*; or is powerless.
2. We are against sanctimony; we believe in loving the neighbor as *ourselves*.	2. We should love our neighbors more than ourselves, namely, From each according to his ability to each according to his need.

*Neither moral nor immoral; indifferent.

3. We are against "divine right" claims of *any* government, including a popular government.	3. *All* governments have a certain "divine right"; there is a direct pipe line from God to them; that pipe line gives them powers beyond (contrary to) the Decalogue.
4. We are against cooperation with evil men, especially communists, whose leaders have been the biggest butchers in the history of men.	4. There should be a policy of cooperation (as in the United Nations) between the contrary systems, capitalism and communism; and coexistence.
5. We are against all coercion of *all* kinds, except to restrain evil. We include under our condemnation coercion by unions.	5. Coercion is not sin. Coercion is to be permitted in order to "do good," and individuals and groups can take coercion into their own hands.
6. We believe in Individualism, rightly understood. We believe in it *in principle*. It happens that we think as the founders of the United States did.	6. All Individualism, including English Individualism, is selfish and godless, as was the French Revolution and French Individualism.
7. We are for liberty, and against unequal laws.	7. Equality is preferable to liberty. Equality is to be obtained by laws operating unequally. By such devices the differences created by God among men can be nullified.

In the left hand column are the ideas,* which our critic calls "material and reactionary ideas." We believe his charge is incorrect. We believe we are neither materialistic nor reactionary.

*Readers are referred to the 1955 issues of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM for more extensive and exact presentation of these ideas.

Prevailing Contrary Ideas

The writer of the letter which we have quoted is a typical product, we believe, of the educational system of a Calvinist denomination. Does he reflect a *typical* attitude of many members of the denomination toward the subjects we have mentioned, namely, (1) religion must be unprofitable or at least unpleasant; (2) religion must put up as sanctimonious a front as socialism-communism does; the churches cannot afford to be outdone in sanctimony; (3) all governments *must* be obeyed; they have *divine* authority; (4) to tolerate and cooperate with communism is better than to refuse to tolerate or cooperate; (5) coercion (although a violation of brotherly love) is all right if it is done in the name of brotherly love; (6) there is really no difference between one system of ideas called Individualism which leads to socialism-communism, and a contrary system of ideas which is irreconcilable with socialism-communism; and (7) unequal laws are to be preferred to equal and general laws?

The Typical Line-Up In Calvinist Denominations

There is reason to believe that the seven ideas which have been outlined in PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM in 1955 are disliked intensely by large and influential factions in Calvinist churches. Those factions appear to have become unsympathetic and ashamed of the old frame of ideas in their denominations. Those ideas lacked "culture." Simultaneously, these factions have absorbed the popular myths of the age in regard to materialism, brotherly love, individualism, and the authority of government. These outside ideas have now been joined to old Calvinism and we have *neo*-Calvinism.

"Conservative" factions have opposed all this, using the old shibboleths and passwords. But they are in retreat on many fronts; or rather they have become silenced on many fronts. Many of the "conservatives" are afraid to fight. Their opinions are revealed only in private conversations *confidentially.*

Into this situation PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM has entered in a bold manner. It has taken neither a *neo*-Calvinist position which it considers as departing from Scripture and as pseudo-scientific; nor a stereotyped conservative position which it considers nonprog-

ressive. And what is the reaction? Anxiety on the part of the conservatives, and rage on the part of the *neo*-Calvinists.

Caution — prudence — is a sure hallmark of the wiser among men. The real leaders of *neo*-Calvinism have not, naturally, revealed their attitude. They are watching and waiting; who knows some heresy might pop up (anything *progressive* always runs the risk of "heresy"). But the attitude of *neo*-Calvinism may with ease be discovered from those who have been taught in its churches and schools, and who being less experienced, are less prudent.

The man from whose letter we have quoted at the beginning of this article is a case in point: reared in Grand Rapids, educated in Calvinist and denominational schools, and taught morality in its churches. As in others with a similar background the ideas of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM arouse his rage and his contempt.

There is a Dutch idiom which says: the apple never falls far from the tree, which means that children reflect the character of their parents; and that persons educated in certain schools reflect the character of their instruction. Does our critic by his letter reveal faithfully the character of his environment and his education?

The Bad Manners And The Folly Of Contempt

Our critic writes us:

> Seldom does one read such presumptive, pseudo-erudite and sophomoric drivel which claims for itself such span and depth.

Our critic may be right. We shall not dispute with him about his description of us. We are not disposed to believe that we prove ourselves to be right by declaring that we are competent. A man's self-opinion is well known to be very unreliable.

While we are not disposed to dispute the correctness of his description, we do question the wisdom of it. A denomination and its schools can possibly not be expected to teach manners, nor to give the reasons for morality; (if the church is "authoritarian" in its teachings, it can dispense with *logical* reasons for avoiding expressions of contempt).

Rather than to appeal to scriptural *brotherly love* (1) in regard to the manners of contempt, or (2) in regard to reasons for avoiding expressions of contempt, we shall quote two secular writers, neither of whom is eagerly claimed by the Christian religion, David Hume (1711-1776) and Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527). (Hume wrote an essay on *Miracles* which we do not recommend to churchmen, and Machiavelli gave advice on how to conduct a successful assassination.) We shall quote Hume on the *manners* of this contempt business, and Machiavelli on the *morality* (utility or nonutility, wisdom or folly) of contempt.

Hume, On Manners

Hume, younger son of a poor Scottish gentleman, had to make his own way in the world, and when he turned to philosophy, history and literature his mother lamented that that gave evidence of an "uncommonly weak mind." Hume, in his *Moral and Political Philosophy,* page 244 (Hafner Publishing Company, New York, 1948), has written as good a summary, we believe, of good manners as has been written. It is as follows (our italics):

> ... in like manner ... [because] of men's pride and self-conceit, ... [there have been] introduced the rules of "good manners" or "politeness" in order to facilitate the intercourse of minds and an undisturbed commerce and conversation. *Among well-bred people a mutual deference is affected; contempt of others disguised, authority concealed, attention given to each in his turn; and an easy stream of conversation maintained, without vehemence, without interruption, without eagerness for victory, and without any airs of superiority.* ...

Hume ascribes the need for good manners to be the minimizing of the disturbing effects of *pride* and *conceit.* And here is his description of good manners:

1. *Mutual deference is affected* (pretended): you show *respect* to each other;

2. *Contempt of others disguised*: you avoid showing you think poorly of others;

3. *Authority concealed*: you *ask* your employee to *please* do something, instead of ordering him around;

4. *Attention given to each in his turn*: you make the rounds and talk to everybody at the party and not only to the great man or the charming lady;

5. *An easy stream of conversation maintained*: you do not sit by silently nor converse excessively; *without vehemence*: without raising your voice, profanity, threats or extreme gestures or grimaces; *without interruption*: waiting until the other person has finished; *without eagerness of victory*: without *obviously* trying to win an argument and thereby humble others; *and without airs of superiority*: implying that after you have spoken the discussion is ended.

Machiavelli On The Folly Of Contempt

Machiavelli approaches the problem of *contempt* differently. He is not against contempt because it is bad manners but because it is "contrary to purpose." If a man shows contempt, he must have a purpose. The purpose obviously is to injure the person toward whom he shows contempt and to help himself. Smith and I have a dispute. Smith seeks public support; I seek public support. Smith shows his contempt for me in various ways; I show my contempt of Smith in various ways. Each hopes our contempt will injure the other. How much are both of us ahead? Nothing at all.

Contempt is not a form of argument. It is a means by which one man can show spite to another, and please people already on one's own side. But that spite and entertainment are really expensive. Machiavelli, in *The Discourses,* page 373, (The Modern Library, New York), writes a chapter entitled, "Contempt and Insults Engender Hatred Against Those Who Indulge in Them, Without Being of Any Advantage to Them":

> I hold it to be a proof of great prudence for men to abstain from threats and insulting words towards any one, for neither the one nor the other in any way diminishes the strength of the enemy; but the one [threats] makes him more cautious, and the other [insulting words] increases his hatred of you, and makes him more persevering in his efforts to injure you. . . . A striking instance of this occurred in Asia, when Gabades, commander of the Persians, having for a long time besieged Amida and becoming weary of the siege, resolved to abandon it; and

having already broken up his camp, the inhabitants of the place came upon the walls, and, inflated with the thought of victory, assailed his army with every kind of insult, vilifying them and accusing and reproaching them for their cowardice and poltroonery. Gabades, irritated by this, changed his mind and resumed the siege, and his indignation at these insults so stimulated his efforts, that he took the city in a few days, and gave it up to sack and pillage. The same thing happened to the Veienti, who, not content with making war upon the Romans, outraged them with insulting words, advancing up to the very stockade of their camp to fling insults at them, thus irritating the Romans more by their words than their arms; so that the soldiers, who at first had fought unwillingly, now constrained the Consuls to bring on a battle, in which they made the Veienti suffer the penalties of their insolence. It is the duty, therefore, of every good general of an army, or chief of a republic, to use all proper means to prevent such insults and reproaches from being indulged in by citizens or soldiers, either amongst themselves or against the enemy; for if used against an enemy they give rise to the above-described inconveniences, and between the soldiers and the citizens it is even worse, unless they are promptly put a stop to, as has ever been done by prudent rulers. . . . Tiberius Gracchus, who in the war with Hannibal had been called to the command of a certain number of slaves, who had been armed because of the scarcity of freemen, ordered amongst the first things that the penalty of death should be inflicted upon whoever reproached any of them with their former servitude; so dangerous did the Romans esteem it to treat men with contempt, or to reproach them with any previous disgrace, because nothing is more irritating and calculated to excite greater indignation than such reproaches, whether founded upon truth or not; "for harsh sarcasms, even if they have but the least truth in them, leave their bitterness rankling in the memory."

Manifestations of contempt, according to Machiavelli, accomplish nothing. Contempt is against purpose.

Readers will have noted that our correspondent did two things: (1) that he made a double charge against our ideas, namely, that they were "material and reactionary"; and (2) that he wished us to know of his contempt. Readers will also have noted from the foregoing (1) that we felt obligated to answer the *charges* as well as we could, and (2) that we do not in any way *complain* about the contempt manifested toward us; we have merely quoted others to the effect (1) that the manifestation of contempt is not good manners and (2) that contempt has in history proved to be "contrary to purpose" and without utility; what our correspondent has written does not "offend" us in the least. fn

How "Liberty" Can Destroy Liberty

Liberty is usually considered to be destroyed only by tyranny and violence. But there is a very real danger that "liberty" of a certain kind will itself destroy liberty. Let us consider a simple illustration.

Jones is a very devout man. He has studied "his Bible," and as a result he has developed a new brand of Christianity which he calls Jonesology. He lives in this free country of the United States and he organizes a church which he calls the Jonesist church.

Let us assume that Jones and PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM, although they disagree on many things, do agree on what the law means which reads, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Assume that we both agree that that means:*

(1) That we may not harm the neighbor;

(2) That we may coerce him only to keep him from exploiting and damaging his neighbor;

(3) That we must be forbearing if our neighbor injures us, and be disposed to forgive him;

(4) That we must engage in charity; and

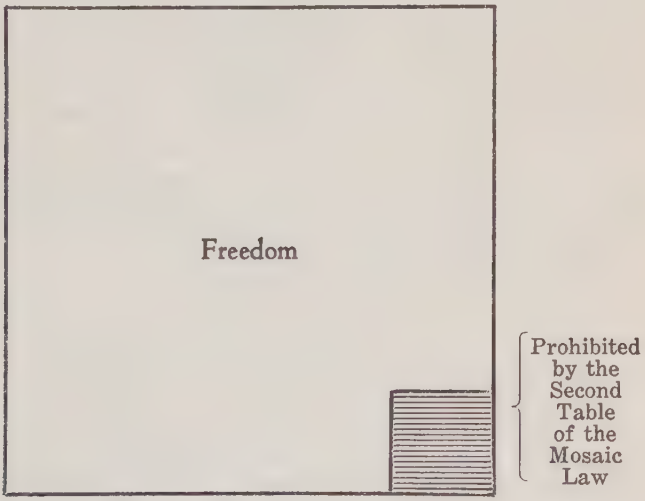
(5) That we must endeavor to bring the gospel to the neighbor.

*For details on what follows see February, March, April and May, 1955, issues of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM.

But beyond that, we are agreed that we are all free — Jones, we ourselves, and all our neighbors. Life, we believe, is mostly freedom, except that we do not have "freedom to do wrong." Looking at it rightly, there is so much happiness available in the great area where we do not wrong our neighbors, that we have plenty of room for loads of happiness.

On page 65 in the March, 1955, issue we showed a diagram to illustrate how small a segment of life was unfree (prohibited) and how large a segment was really free, *if we looked at life properly.* The only part not free was that part which consisted of "exploiting" our neighbor (by violence, adultery, theft, fraud and coveting). Here is the schematic diagram we used:

A Man's Life



We have also conceded that there is properly one agency which can enforce that prohibition, namely, the state or government. The government is the one agency which we authorize to keep us from injuring each other. It is *sovereign;* it has what the Romans called *supra potestas,* that is, supreme power.

But a very disturbing event happens.

There is a neighbor named Brown. Brown decides he wishes to join the Jonesist church and he approaches the church board.

But after several interviews and discussions the board of the Jonesist church decides not to accept Brown's application for membership. The board declares that Brown's ideas do not agree with Jonesology. All negotiations fail. The Jonesist church will not accept Brown.

Brown becomes very dissatisfied. He lives in a Jonesist community. He feels and is in a large degree excluded from Jonesist social life; from the Jonesist church; from the Jonesist school. Brown declares he is being treated as a "second-class" citizen in his community. He protests to the public generally. And he appeals to the state, the government. He complains that his "liberty" is being restricted. Jones and PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM and everybody, so he declares, are agreed that we all have full liberty to do anything we please *except to harm the neighbor.* He further declares that he is not harming Jones by wishing to join Jones's church. Therefore, so Brown reasons, Jones and his fellow members have by an agreement, by an organization, by a *mutual contract,* restricted his (Brown's) liberty. He (Brown) cannot do what he wishes to do. The so-called "free area" for the enjoyment of life (the area outside the exploitation of the neighbor) is no longer really free to him. In fact, when he looks around he sees all kinds of organizations on all sides which have restrictions — restrictions which pertain to religion, education, wealth, color, age, nationality, race, employment, abilities.

Brown thinks it over and talks to himself in this manner: Scripture says I have a magnificent free area in which to enjoy life, namely, all of life except robbing my neighbor of life, wife and wealth, but these neighbors of mine have engaged in an unbrotherly deception. I am willing to abide by Scripture, but not by that further restriction which consists of my neighbors contracting among themselves against me on this and that ground, so that everywhere I see signs which read, "Stay Out," as numerous as signs which read, "Stay off the grass."

By Scripture I have lost a small amount of freedom (the freedom to exploit my neighbor); but by the "contracts" which my neighbors make among themselves they have effectively excluded me from a lot of other things. This must be wrong. It must be a violation of my legitimate liberty. I therefore wish to get a law passed saying that I may not be kept out of the Jonesist church,

nor out of anything else to which I wish to belong. And I shall accuse the Jonesist church of violating Scripture because it will not admit me; Scripture actually says that everybody in the churches should be "one" — "branches" all of one "vine." Unless the government gives me relief, it is *unjust;* unless the Jonesist church board members admit me, they are *unbrotherly* and do not love me as themselves.

Brown engages in propaganda. He succeeds in getting a law passed that there may be no discrimination *because of religion.*

Wonderful; there are now no more any "second-class" citizens not good enough for the Jonesist church! The law requires that Brown be admitted; if he did not accept Jonesology before he was admitted, it is now the problem of the church to persuade him that Jonesology is just right. If they cannot persuade him, it is too bad but there is nothing to be done about it.

However, the Jonesist regular people do not like it, even though they finally admit the Browns and all others as the law requires.

Later the Jonesists move. They hold another drive. They build a new church. Everything seems peaceful and lovely.

Then Brown moves into that new neighborhood. Again he demands admittance. Because the law requires that his "liberty" may not be restricted, he is again admitted.

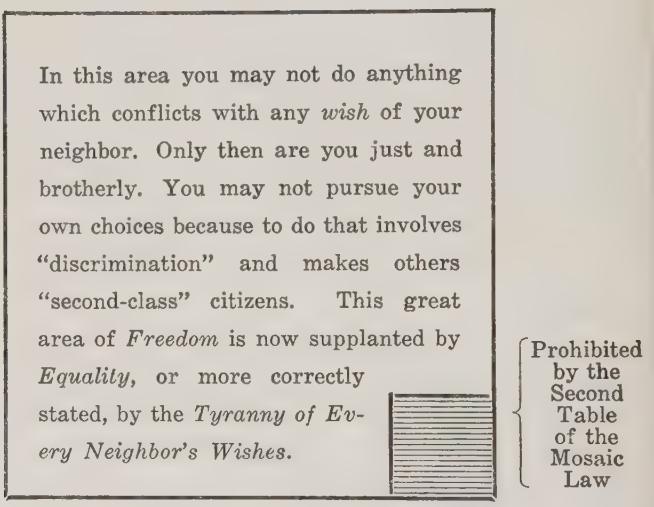
The Jonesists move again. They begin all over. But it is futile. Brown and others follow.

The Jonesists ask themselves: what has happened to us? We desire liberty to do what we wish. But our liberty is gone. No two of us can agree to something but a third man calls out "No fair." In fact, all our real liberty is gone, or seems to be gone, in order to give someone else some sort of liberty. We cannot live our own life anymore. Can there be something wrong with our belief regarding what Scripture teaches? We thought it taught *freedom* except that we might not do wrong. But now we see that that seems to mean that there can be no freedom which restricts anyone else's "freedom." Obeying Moses, we excluded exploiting our neighbor, but now we learn that "brotherly love" seems to require that we

never collide with our neighbor's *wishes.* Our "freedom," Brown says, has destroyed his freedom; and his "freedom," we are certain, has destroyed our freedom. There is, therefore, no real freedom left. Freedom is a mirage, a pretense and a deception.

We can now re-draw our symbolic chart of life to illustrate the situation which has developed.

A Man's Life


In this area you may not do anything which conflicts with any *wish* of your neighbor. Only then are you just and brotherly. You may not pursue your own choices because to do that involves "discrimination" and makes others "second-class" citizens. This great area of *Freedom* is now supplanted by *Equality,* or more correctly stated, by the *Tyranny of Every Neighbor's Wishes.*
Prohibited by the Second Table of the Mosaic Law

The Jonesists talk to Brown. They say: somehow or other, your liberty seems to destroy our liberty; and our liberty in turn seems to destroy your liberty. What really has happened to us?

What has happened is very simple. By means of a *false definition of liberty* real liberty has been destroyed in the names of *justice* and *brotherly love.*

The Jonesist church case is not a fantasy. Ideas as Brown's are widely accepted. Because of strange definitions of *liberty, justice* and *brotherly love,* there is frequent unfavorable mention in magazines circulating in the Christian Reformed church of "second-class citizens," which is as spurious an idea as can be promoted in the name of religion.

If there is any place, time and organization in which *liberty* needs to be defined, it is in the United States, presently, in the Christian Reformed Church.

What indeed *is* liberty?

(The remaining articles in this issue present some preliminary and very partial answers.) fn

A Great Netherlander Who Had One Answer To The Problem Of "Liberty" Destroying Liberty, Namely, Sphere Sovereignty

Abraham Kuyper, Dutch theologian and premier, had an answer to the kind of problem outlined in the preceding article. Kuyper's answer consisted in saying that there are "sphere sovereignties."

The natural question to ask is: what is *sphere sovereignty?* We shall answer that question by taking Kuyper's own description as it appears in his two-volume work entitled, *Anti-Revolutionaire Staatkunde,* Volume I, pages 265 and following.

Kuyper declares that a government receives its sovereignty directly from God. Having declared that much, he immediately sets out to restrict that great and direct sovereignty of the government by declaring that there are other sovereignties which are equally directly from God. Kuyper writes (our translation):

> With great earnestness and force it is necessary not only to protest against the alleged omnipotence of the state, but also to resist it. That alleged omnipotence of the state is the most unbearable tyranny that can be imagined. A group of men of coercive temper, by flattery and deception, by beglamouring with promises, discovers how to obtain support from the masses, and promptly seats itself on the throne of God and conducts itself as though omnipotent, in order to give free reign to love of power and to covetousness. ... we are exposed to the

> great danger, under the high sounding name of state sovereignty, that progressive inroads are made on our personal and social liberty.

One of the three specific reasons which Kuyper gives for *limited* sovereignty of the government is as follows:

> The sovereignty, exercised by men through delegation [from God] is subdivided. It extends over many and various spheres (areas) and has in each sphere a special character. There is the sphere of the Family, the sphere of the Church, the sphere of Science and Art, the sphere of Technique and Research, the sphere of Commerce, Production, Agriculture, Hunting and Fishing; and finally the sphere of free, Social Organizations. ... In each of these spheres, sphere sovereignty must be acknowledged, and those who exercise it must defend that sovereignty with tooth and nail. Adjacent, in part subordinate to these, there is the Official Sovereignty of Law and Justice, represented by the State. Although this Official Sovereignty has certain proper powers to protect formally the mutual relations of the other spheres, and thereby make possible orderly human society, it may never present itself as having a sovereignty from which the sovereignty of the other spheres were merely derived. This is never the case. The sovereign authorities of the family, of the church, etc., are derived as directly from God as is the sovereign authority of the government. The Government does not create the other sphere sovereignties, but must limit itself to recognizing them, and where in public they ask for support or where they conflict, to regulate between them, in order to promote their growth or avoid conflict. No more.

Kuyper then goes on to outline in further detail the character of the five major sovereign, autonomous spheres he has mentioned in addition to the State sphere, towit:

1. The Family;
2. The Church;
3. Science and Art;
4. Economic Life;
5. All Social Organizations.

(The sixth sphere is, of course, the State.)

Kuyper was obviously a man who was interested in *liberty*. His sphere sovereignty scheme of thought was especially designed to protect liberty.

When someone outlines a system which divides sovereignty and splinters it into six divisions, he is obviously greatly limiting the sovereignty of any of the six. Kuyper goes further; in his thinking the five big spheres are all subject to further subdivisions (and of course the sixth is subdivided too between national, provincial and city government). The economic sphere is not *one* sphere but many. The social sphere is subdivided into innumerable subspheres — all sovereign — spheres as small as baseball leagues. If a baseball league is *sovereign* as an independent social sphere, then the government has no business, according to Kuyper, to regulate a baseball league. That is why Kuyper emphatically declares as we previously quoted him that:

> With great earnestness and force it is necessary not only to protect against the alleged omnipotence of the state, *but also to resist it. The alleged omnipotence of the State is the most unbearable tyranny that can be imagined.*

In the long and troubled history of the human race various thinkers have set up ideas to protect liberty. Those ideas and the institutions that result from those ideas are the practical ramparts of liberty. Some of these ramparts are merely ideas; they are not *practical* means to protect liberty. *Constitutions* and *representative government* and *equality before the law* are examples of *practical* ramparts to liberty. It cannot be alleged that Kuyper's protection of liberty had such practical features. His scheme protected liberty by *an idea,* namely, subdivided and equal and multifarious sovereignties. It is only an idea. But ideas control men. As Scripture says: As a man thinketh in his heart so he is. If men will think in terms of (1) limited government sovereignty, (2) widely diffused sovereignty, and (3) sovereignties developed *voluntarily* (that is voluntary families, voluntary churches, voluntary science and art, voluntary economic life, and voluntary social organizations) then there will be great and wonderful freedom.

The interesting question can now be asked whether Kuyper's idea on sphere sovereignty has an answer for the impasse into which we reasoned ourselves in the preceding article. The reader will remember that Brown was able to get the government (one sphere) to pass a law controlling a church matter (another sphere), that is, one sphere lording it over another. Can this "liberty" of Brown supported by the state destroy liberty of the church, if society is organized according to Kuyper's scheme of thought?

The answer is an unqualified *No.*

Kuyper has escaped the circular reasoning outlined in the preceding article by two specific ideas:

1. Whereas the reasoning in the preceding article permitted any man to force his way into any organization or sphere by means of a government law that he could not be excluded (discriminated against), Kuyper declares that the government may not intrude on intra-sphere matters. On that basis Kuyper has denied all right of a government to interfere in family, church, intellectual, economic and social life. He has made the most sweeping rejection that can be made of the claims of men who argue as Brown did in the preceding article.

2. Not only has Kuyper denied that a government may legislate to control a sphere; he declares the sphere basically untouchable, sovereign, a law unto itself. A sphere therefore is self-regulatory. It sets its own standards of admission and operation and exclusion. Kuyper accepts a principle that a church can by its standards exclude anybody it wishes to exclude, and that it is no business of the government to interfere. Sovereignty implies independence; independence implies freedom of choice; freedom of choice unavoidably involves discrimination. By his idea of sphere sovereignty Kuyper authorizes discrimination; by sphere sovereignty he denies the right of the government to prohibit discrimination in any sphere.

Probably the most interesting thing is the *extent* of Kuyper's independent spheres, namely, the family, the church, the intellectual world, economic life, and social life. This covers *all* man's activities outside of the restraint of evil which is a government function. In fact, Kuyper by his spheres has left all of life free to voluntary organization.

When Kuyper made sphere sovereignty a fundamental part of his thought he was a true champion of liberty. (In his further thinking, he unfortunately favored various forms of economic interventionism. Economic interventionism is obviously inconsistent with sphere sovereignty, and there is the further inconsistency of implying that some of the five spheres have less liberty than the church sphere.

The *true* followers of Kuyper have seized and promoted the idea of Kuyper regarding sphere sovereignty. They teach it as one of his great and wonderful ideas. The pseudo-followers of Kuyper teach his interventionist ideas. It must be admitted that the pseudo-followers can quote interventionist ideas of Kuyper. But they are not, we believe the *real* followers of the *real* Kuyper. The trouble is that Kuyper himself failed to observe *complete* consistency. fn

Happiness, Liberty, Discrimination

This is a statement in favor of happiness, liberty and discrimination.

Happiness

There is only one ultimate nonpersonal abstract good, namely, happiness.

That is what the living strive for. One difference between a stone and a man is that a stone does not strive; man does.

The purpose of all striving is to attain a satisfaction or remove an uneasiness or, in other words, happiness.

In I Corinthians 13 the Apostle Paul talks about three great virtues — faith, hope and love, and declares love to be the supreme virtue. But why should love be a supreme virtue except it promotes happiness? Paul was talking about *means* and not *ends*. Of the three *means* to happiness, love, he declares, is more abiding than faith or hope; the single *end* is happiness.

The Heidelberg Catechism begins on a note that refers to happiness. It asks: "What is my only *comfort* in life and in

death?" The question clearly relates to a sense of security which is called *comfort,* and comfort is merely stable and secure happiness.

The Westminster Catechism begins by asking: "What is the chief aim of man?" — and answers, "To know God and *enjoy* Him forever." This equally has the meaning that happiness is the greatest thing in the world; otherwise, why speak of eternal enjoyment.

Whenever love is mentioned as the greatest thing in the world, it signifies that it is the greatest *means* in the world to the real *objective* of all living things, namely, happiness.

When anything no longer strives for happiness, it has reverted to its material, nonliving components. A live man strives. A man's dead body no longer strives. It has become as a stone or dust.

Men by their mortal and finite constitution cannot ever be perfectly happy in this life. If a man were perfectly happy with everything as it is, he would not move, eat, sleep, think, act. Why would he? He presumably is already perfectly "happy." Perfect happiness is therefore inconceivable in this life.

Religion is considered by many people to be a rather glum business; there is little happiness in it, according to their observation. Indeed, religion often looks painful or is professed by some who seem to say, I'm saved, but you are not. It is sometimes hardly possible to tell whether they are selfishly happy about themselves or somewhat maliciously at ease about the bad future they estimate that their neighbor has.

True religion, it appears reasonable to believe, should promote happiness and should manifest such happiness. The real objective of all living is happiness. (We are not discussing to what extent that happiness depends on spiritual values and to what extent on material values.)

Liberty

When the getting of happiness is understood to be what it is, namely, the purpose of all living and acting, then helplessness is a very great evil.

Helplessness can be in the form of feebleness, that is, lack of strength or power. Helplessness can also be not feebleness but obstruction of some sort, that is, strength without liberty. The obstruction can be the physical circumstances of life, such as limited food supplies, or heat or cold, or something that our fellow men do to obstruct us, frustrate us, and by such frustration make us unhappy.

If happiness involves striving and if things and fellow beings obstruct and frustrate us, then what we all want is maximum liberty — at least maximum liberty for ourselves, if not for all men. It is inevitable that we mortals will seem to be "in each other's way." Men then finally come to the conclusion that much can be done for general happiness by having certain rules by which everybody must play. The rules are never properly designed to reduce liberty and action because happiness is unattainable without wide liberty to choose and to act.

And so men come to love liberty to such an extent that they declare with Patrick Henry, "Give me liberty or give me death."

Liberty does not consist merely in living in a republic or a constitutional monarchy. These are usually (but not always) lands of liberty. A republic or a constitutional monarchy may pass many restrictive (interventionist) laws and so frustrate liberty.

The Christian church, which ought to promote happiness and also liberty as a means to happiness, does not always promote liberty. In fact, the church can be one of the greatest agencies for tyranny. All the church needs to do to become a perfect spiritual agency for tyranny is to define *brotherly love* so that a man has no liberty for himself anymore. His neighbor has claim after claim on him, in the name of *brotherly love; you* must live for your neighbor! If so, it is a tyranny.

And so coercive law can destroy liberty; but, in addition, brotherly love (mistakenly understood) can equally — even more effectively — destroy liberty.

Examine the world around us and ask what is happening. The answer is: (1) government by coercive laws and (2) churches by sanctimonious ideas on brotherly love are everyday curtailing liberty

— and are in the process of destroying happiness. This situation in the churches is practically universal, and is equally true of conservative Calvinist denominations.

Consider the primitive example we have given of Jonesology and of Brown in the second article in this issue. We presented the case as one in which the government declares the Jonesist church might not have the liberty to refuse to accept Brown as a member, and so apparently discriminate against him. He was "authorized by law" to force his way into the Jonesist church, school life and social life. But on all sides there are churchmen who say the same thing in the name of religion. *Brotherly love,* they seem to believe, disqualifies preferences and likes and dislikes. Love demands, according to this definition, perfect "equality." Therefore, brotherly love, they conclude, requires that Brown must not be excluded from the Jonesist church, if Brown wishes to get in. Brown must in no way be frustrated in his liberty, or brotherly love is thereby proved to be lacking.

Abraham Kuyper, when he worked through his ideas of *sphere sovereignty* (see preceding article), was developing his own theory of liberty. He was struggling for a concept of freedom. For him undoubtedly, as for all others, freedom was a great agency to accomplish the chief end of all the living, namely, happiness. His sphere sovereignty might be called sphere liberty.

All men subscribe to wanting happiness. Whenever they limit liberty, they declare the purpose of that limitation to be the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Communists, socialists, democrats, anarchists, all these want happiness — their own if not all men's. All prize *their own* liberty; they all want their own way. If they cannot persuade men, they have an inclination to resort to force.

The foundation of liberty, however, is not force but meekness, which is an unreadiness to coerce. "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth."

Discrimination

Whereas *liberty* is a prerequisite to *happiness,* the unrestricted *right to discriminate* is in turn a prerequisite to liberty. The right

to discriminate is the right to choose according to your own good pleasure (except you may not commit an injustice, that is, violate the Decalogue).

The word *discriminate* means to choose or select. It is a broad term. It is *necessary* and *unavoidable* to choose and select — to discriminate — in this finite world, in which everything is varied and limited. It is not possible to be considered human and not to discriminate. It is even possible to say that plants "discriminate." A sapling standing in the shade of other trees "struggles" for sunlight by growing unduly tall and slender. It "discriminates" — chooses — seeks — the sunlight. It "discriminates" against the shade. Every positive choice has a negative counterpart; every preference involves a discrimination against something.

The word *discriminate* has in late years acquired a bad flavor. There are three kinds of discrimination which are under special attack: discrimination on the basis of *religion,* discrimination on the basis of *race,* and discrimination on the basis of *nationality.*

We wish to challenge the validity of objections to these discriminations. We see no reason why men should not discriminate on grounds of religion, race, or nationality, if they wish. We wish to present the case for the right of *any* and *all* discriminations except discriminations which involve injustice (violation of Second Table of the Law).

The antidiscrimination campaign in the wide world is, in a sense, led by or promoted by communists. (Some churchmen rather glibly repeat what the communists say.) But this antidiscrimination campaign by communism is a false front. It is easy to decry *religious* discrimination among the denominations, when in fact you yourself deny the validity of any religion; that is a discrimination (choice) against *all* religion and is as much a discrimination as any choice among religions. It is easy to decry *race* discrimination and be known to have liquidated about two million *kulaks* (prosperous farmers) who did not wish to be collectivized. It is easy to decry *national* discrimination and be a government which is discriminating against and systematically exploiting all its satellites.

The antidiscrimination campaign of the communists is nothing else than a *discrimination campaign of its own kind.* But its own

discrimination campaign is masked under the pretense that it is nondiscriminatory. Every person alleging that he is nondiscriminatory is self-deceived or insincere. The communists are not deceived; they are insincere. It is impossible not to discriminate. The conditions of life require discriminaton.

What, if any, discrimination is forbidden? The discrimination that is forbidden is the discriminaton that involves injustice. And in our thinking injustice is discrimination which involves coercion, fraud and theft. All other discriminations are, we submit, permissible. We definitely favor discriminations based on religion. We see no reason why someone else may not discriminate, if he wishes, on grounds of race or nationality. That is their proper freedom — avoiding always injustice. Whether we would be willing to go along with them or not is an entirely different problem.

Why should not someone discriminate against (choose against) neo-Calvinism or Progressive Calvinism or against any Calvinism if he wishes? Why should not neo-Calvinism oppose Progressive Calvinism if that is the inclination of the neo-Calvinist? Why should not a Calvinist favor a Calvinist, if he wishes? Why should not a Jew favor a Jew, if he wishes? Why should not a Catholic favor a Catholic, if he wishes? Why should not a native favor a native, if he wishes?

Why should a Catholic be urged to hire Protestants and Jews and Mohammedans, if he prefers Catholics? Why should not a religious man be permitted to favor a religious community, and why should not an irreligious man be permitted to favor an irreligious community?

All churches who truly believe their religion has real meaning actually do discriminate on the grounds of religion, that is, on the grounds of their own specific rules and practices. You cannot get into the Catholic church on your terms; only on hers. You cannot get into a vital Protestant church on your terms; only on her terms.

If that freedom to set terms is denied any organization, then there is a denial of sphere sovereignty. According to the doctrine of *sphere sovereignty,* every group is a sovereign sphere in its own matters. According to that brand of sociology, a social *sphere* can

decide and do what it pleases (except violate the Second Table of the Law.)

But, it will be alleged, there *is* an injustice involved in the setting of standards which admit one and exclude the other. Some people because of those standards become "second-class" citizens. *Fortunately,* we are all in some regard second-class or tenth-class citizens. Let us be thankful that our neighbors have some qualities we do not have, and that they can have the satisfaction of doing something we cannot do. That sustains their morale.

Consider a choral society. Say that I wish to join. Suppose I consider myself to be a wonderful prospect for the choral society, although the fact is that I cannot carry a tune and have no sense of rhythm; (these happen to be the *facts*). Aside from that, I am a wondeful singer! The choral society is, however, *discriminatory.* They have *arbitrarily* set up the standard that members must be able to carry a tune and keep time. Those discriminators! They have made me a second-class citizen! Call the police! Injustice is being done me!

But is it not all absurd? God made us all different; (let us avoid the unpleasant term, *unequal*). Why should I not be willing to stay out of that choral society? But if a great campaign is organized that there shall be no discrimination on the ground of religion, race, nationality, or *musical ability,* it will not be long before the choral societies will decide that they must accept me, or otherwise they will be perpetrating an injustice on me and making me a second-class citizen.

Discriminations are of two kinds:

1. Discriminations against something you do not like which is *alterable* in the person who has that characteristic.
2. Discriminations against something you do not like which is *unalterable* in the person who has that characteristic.

Men will generally say that it is *just* to discriminate against the alterable characteristics but that it is unjust to discriminate against unalterable characteristics.

Assume a girl is dirty, unsanitary, smells. You stay *at a distance* from her. You discriminate against her company. Most people will say that your attitude is not immoral: "Let her take a bath. We do not blame people for avoiding her." And so people declare no injustice has been perpetrated. Her uncleanliness was correctable; her plight — unpopularity — is her own fault.

In fact, all improvement among men depends on fellowmen showing their disapproval — discriminating against — unattractive *alterable* characteristics. The churches discriminate against sin. When they stop discriminating against sin, they might as well disband, except to perform weddings and officiate at funerals.

But the *moral* crux of the problem of discrimination is the discrimination against *unalterable* characteristics. Is it moral to discriminate against *unalterable* characteristics regarding which a man is helpless? Here is where the race problem becomes so sensitive. A man with a white skin cannot do anything about it; a man with a black skin cannot do anything about it. Why discriminate against (choose against) a man for that for which he has no remedy, for an unalterable trait that is unattractive to you and maybe others? Here is where cruel injustice appears immorally to intrude itself into the situation. But is it injustice?

If the writer has made an earnest effort to carry a tune and keep time (which he has) but is unable (which happens to be the fact), is an injustice done him because he is "discriminated" against by a choral society which discriminates against a trait he had which is unalterable for him? Of course not. Justice does not consist in denying reality or the facts of life; injustice is not identical with recognizing reality (that I cannot sing).

And so we hold — in the name of happiness, and in the name of liberty, and in the name of the right to discriminate — that there is no more "injustice" in discriminating against an unalterable trait than against an alterable trait; neither is an injustice. For us, every discrimination is valid except a discrimination involving injustice.

And whoever believes in *sphere* sovereignty also must believe in liberty to discriminate against either *alterable* or *unalterable* traits.

We aim at happiness and insist on having liberty and the universal right to discriminate. We believe in *freedom* to discriminate on the basis of religion, race, nationality, ability, age, sex, industriousness, thrift, beauty — on every basis that the human mind can think of, *except injustice.*

One thing should be noted extraordinarily carefully. We have not declared ourselves in favor of all specific discriminations; we have only declared ourselves in favor of *freedom* to discriminate except to discriminate unjustly.

We recommend to all Calvinists that same attitude toward complete freedom in regard to discriminations.

Unavoidably, the next question that presses for attention is the question: What is *injustice?* Certainly, that is a very fundamental question. fn

The Tyranny of Brotherly Love

Ancient history, as once taught in small country towns, in the United States, involved two contrasting ideas: (1) tyrants and (2) free peoples. As a youth we learned to abhor tyrants — individual men who were wicked, siezed power, oppressed people.

Today tyranny is described by a less personal word, namely, dictatorship. The emphasis has shifted from a man to a system.

But a new type of dictatorship is arising. Let us contrast it with the earlier two:

1. An old-fashioned tyrant (in an ancient city state).
2. A modern dictatorship operating through a huge state apparatus.
3. A dictatorship of "brotherly love," which makes every man a tyrant over all other men.

This dictatorship, or tyranny, or oppression in the name of brotherly love needs a brief explanation so that nobody will fail to realize that it is entirely different from ancient tyranny or from modern dictatorships.

Readers are referred to the drawings on pages 47 and 50. What was believed to be a free area in the first drawing turns out

in the second drawing to be an area of "tyranny in the name of brotherly love," a "dictatorship of the neighbor," and "anarchism by which all voluntary associations are destroyed." This is *not* a despotism of *one* man, nor a despotism *originally* stemming from a bureaucratic state apparatus, but an all-inclusive moral claim of *every* man on *all other* men. The claim is advanced in the name of the Christian religion, of morality, of love, of liberty, of equality and of justice.

It is this sanctimonious claim which underlies the various references to "second-class citizens" which appear occasionally in *The Banner,* one of the official magazines of the Christian Reformed church (particularly the department entitled, "Other Churches in the News" by Rev. Peter Van Tuinen); and which appear in *The Reformed Journal* and in *The Young Calvinist,* magazines circulating extensively in the Christian Reformed Church.

Brown, pursuing *his* liberty and demanding "equality" and "justice" (in the second article in this issue) was exercising a tyranny over his neighbors, a tyranny condemned by Abraham Kuyper's *sphere sovereignty.*

If the term *sphere sovereignty* is used to designate freedom, what term shall we coin to designate the contrary idea, namely, of tyranny in the name of brotherly love, a tyranny masking under the guise of Christianity, justice, equality, nondiscrimination, liberty?

We shall be glad to get suggestions for a name for this new anarchic tyranny. fn

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